

# PIECES OF EIGHT

BEING THE AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE OF A TREASURE DISCOVERED IN THE BAHAMA ISLANDS IN THE YEAR 1903. NOW FIRST GIVEN TO THE PUBLIC.

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## THE POCK-MARKED MAN.

Synopsis—The man who tells this story—call him the hero, for short—is visiting his friend John Saunders, British official in Nassau, Bahama Islands. Charlie Webster, a local merchant, completes the trio of friends. Conversation turning upon buried pirate treasure, Saunders produces a written document purporting to be the death-bed statement of Henry P. Tobias, a successful pirate, made by him in 1859. It gives two spots where two millions and a half of treasure were buried by him and his companions. The conversation of the three friends is overheard by a stranger, whose face is deeply pitted by small pox.

## CHAPTER III.

### I Charter the "Maggie Darling."

As luck would have it, the loss, or rather the theft of Henry P. Tobias' narrative was not so serious as it at first seemed, for it fortunately chanced that John Saunders had had it copied; but the theft remained none the less mysterious.

However, leaving that mystery for later solution, John Saunders, Charlie Webster and I spent the next evening in a general and particular criticism of the narrative itself. There were several obvious objections to be made against its authenticity. To start with, Tobias, at the time of his deposition, was an old man—seventy-five years old—and it was more than probable that his experiences as a pirate would date from his early manhood; they were hardly likely to have taken place as late as his fortieth year. The narrative, indeed, suggested their taking place much earlier, and there would thus be a space of at least forty years between the burial of the treasure and his deathbed revelation. It was natural to ask: Why during all those years did he not return and retrieve the treasure for himself? Various circumstances may have prevented him, the inability from lack of means to make the journey, or what not; but certainly one would need to imagine circumstances of peculiar power that should be strong enough to keep a man with so valuable a secret in his possession so many years from taking advantage of it.

For a long while, too, the names given to the purported sites of the treasure caches puzzled us. Modern maps give no such places as "Dead Men's Shoes" and "Short Shift Island," but at last, in a map dating back to 1763, we came upon one of the two names. So far the veracity



Then Tom Came Up With My Breakfast.

of Tobias was supported. "Dead Men's Shoes" proved to be the old name for a certain cove some twenty miles long, about a day and a half's sail from Nassau, one of the long string of coral islands now known as the "Exuma Cays." But of "Short Shift Island" we sought in vain for a trace.

"All the same," said I, "the adventure calls me; the adventure and that million and a half dollars—and those 'Dead Men's Shoes'—and I intend to undertake it. I am not going to let your middle-aged skepticism discourage me. Treasure or no treasure, there will be the excitement of the quest, and all the fun of the sea."

"And some duck perhaps," added Charlie.

"And some shark fishing for certain," said John.

The next thing was to set about getting a boat and a crew.

After looking over much likely and unlikely craft we finally decided on a two-masted schooner of trim but solid build, the Maggie Darling, 42 feet over all and 13 beam; something

under twenty tons, with an auxiliary gasoline engine of 24 horse power, and an alleged speed of ten knots.

Next, the crew. "You will need a captain, a cook, an engineer and a deckhand," said Charlie, "and I have the captain and the cook all ready for you."

That afternoon we rounded them all up, including the engineer and the deckhand, and we arranged to start, weather permitting, with the morning tide, which set east at six o'clock on July 13, 1903.

Ship's stores were the next detail, and these, including fifty gallons of gasoline, over and above the tanks and three barrels of water, being duly got aboard, on the evening of July 12 all was ready for the start; an evening which was naturally spent in a parting conclave in John Saunders' snugery.

"Why, one important thing you've forgotten," said Charlie. "Machetes—and spades and pickaxes. And I'd take a few sticks of dynamite along with you too. I can let you have the lot. We'll get them aboard tonight."

"It's a pity you have to give it away that it's a treasure hunt," said John. "But then you can't keep the crew from knowing. And they're a queer lot on the subject of treasure, have some of the rummiest superstitions. I hope you won't have any trouble with them."

"Had any experience in handling niggers?" asked Charlie.

"Not the least."

"That makes me wish I were coming with you. They are rum beggars. Awful cowards, and just like a pack of children. You know about sailing anyhow. That's a good thing. You can captain your own boat, if need be. That's all to the good. Particularly if you strike any dirty weather. But let me give you one word of advice: Be kind, of course, with them—but keep your distance all the same. And be careful about losing your temper. You get more out of them by coaxing—hard as it is, at times. And, by the way, how would you like to take old 'Sailor' with you?"

"Sailor" was a great Labrador retriever, who at that moment turned up his big head with a devoted sigh from behind his master's chair.

"Rather," I said. So "Sailor" was thereupon enrolled as a further addition to the crew.

"Old Tom," the cook, was first on hand next morning. I took to him at once. A simple, kindly old "darker" of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" type, with faithfulness written all over him, and a certain sad wisdom in his old face.

"You'll find Tom a great cook," said Charlie, patting the old man on the shoulder. "Many a trip we've taken together after duck, haven't we, Tom?"

"That's right, suh. That's right," said the old man, his eyes twinkling with pleasure.

Then came the captain—Capt. Jabez Williams—a younger man, with an intelligent, self-respecting manner, somewhat noncommittal, businesslike, evidently not particularly anxious as to whether he pleased or not, but looking competent and civil enough.

Next came the engineer, a young hulking bronze giant, a splendid physical specimen, but rather heavy and sullen and not over-intelligent to look at. The deckhand proved to be a shuckly, rather silly, effeminate fellow, suggesting idiocy, but doubtless wiry and good enough for the purpose.

While they were busy getting up the anchor of the Maggie Darling I went down into my cabin to arrange various odds and ends, and presently came the captain, touching his hat.

"There's a party," he said, "outside here wants to know if you'll take him passenger to Spanish Wells."

"We're not taking passengers," I answered, "but I will look him over."

A man was standing up in a row-boat, leaning against the ship's side.

"You'd do me a great favor, sir," he began to say in a soft, ingratiating voice.

I looked at him with a start of recognition. He was my pockmarked friend, who had made such an unpleasant impression on me at John Saunders' office. He was rather more gentlemanly looking than he had seemed at the first view, and I saw that, though he was a halfbreed the white blood predominated.

"I don't want to intrude," he said, "but I have urgent need of getting to Spanish Wells, and there's no boat going that way for a week. I've just missed the mail."

"I didn't think of taking any passengers," I said.

"I know," he said. "I know it's a great favor I ask." He spoke with a certain cultivation of manner. "But I am willing of course to pay anything you think well for my food and my passage."

I waived that suggestion aside and stood irresolutely looking at him, with no very hospitable expression in my eyes, I dare say. But really my distaste for him was an unreasonable prejudice, and Charlie Webster's phrase came to my mind—"His face is against the poor devil!"

It certainly was.

Then at last I said, surely not over-

graciously: "Very well. Get aboard. You can help work the boat," and with that I turned away to my cabin.

## CHAPTER IV.

### In Which Tom Catches an Enchanted Fish, and Discourses of the Dangers of Treasure Hunting.

The morning was a little overcast, but a brisk northeast wind soon set the clouds moving as it went humming in our sails, and the sun, coming out in its glory over the crystalline waters, made a fine flashing world of it, full of exhilaration and the very breath of youth and adventure, very uplifting to the heart.

Nassau looked very pretty in the morning sunlight, with its pink and white houses nestling among palm trees and the masts of its sponging schooners, and soon we were abreast of the picturesque low-lying fort, Fort Montague, that Major Bruce, nearly two hundred years ago, had such a time building as a protection against pirates entering from the east end of the harbor. It looked like a veritable piece of the past, and set the imagination dreaming of those old days of Spanish galleons and the black flag, and brought my thoughts eagerly



"Tom and You and I."

back to the object of my trip, those doubloons and pieces of eight that lay in glittering heaps somewhere out in those island wildernesses.

Then Tom came up with my breakfast. The old fellow stood by to serve me as I ate, with a pathetic touch of the old slavery days in his deferential, half-fatherly manner, dropping a quaint remark every now and again; as, when drawing my attention to the sun bursting through the clouds, he said, "The poor man's blanket is coming out, sah"—phrases in which there seemed a whole lot of pathos to me.

Presently, when breakfast was over, and I stood looking over the side into the incredibly clear water, in which it seems hardly possible that a boat can go on floating, suspended as she seems over gleaming gulfs of liquid space, down through which at every moment it seems she must dizzily fall.

As Tom and I gazed down, lost in those rainbow depths, I heard a voice at my elbow saying with peculiarly sickening unctious:

"The wonderful works of God."

It was my unwelcome passenger, who had silently edged up to where we stood. I looked at him, with the question very clear in my eyes as to what kind of disagreeable animal he was.

"Precisely," I said, and moved away. I had been trying to feel more kindly toward him, wondering whether I could summon up the decency to offer him a cigar, but "the wonderful works of God" finished me.

"Hello! captain," I said presently, pointing to some sails coming up rapidly behind us. "What's this? I thought we'd got the fastest boat in the harbor."

"It's the Susan B. sponger," said the captain.

The captain was a man of few words.

The Susan B. was a rakish-looking craft with a black hull, and she certainly could sail. No doubt it was pure imagination, but I did fancy that I noticed our passenger signal to them in a peculiar way.

I confess that his presence was beginning to get on my nerves, and I was ready to get "edgy" at anything or nothing—an irritated state of mind which I presently took out on George the engineer, who did not believe his hulking appearance, and who was forever letting the engine stop and taking forever to get it going again. One could almost have sworn he did it on purpose.

My language was more forcible than classical—had quite a piratical flavor, in fact; and my friend of "the wonderful works of God" looked up with a deprecating air. Its effect on George was nil, except perhaps to further deepen his sulks.

And this I did notice, after a while, that my remarks to George seemed to have set up a certain sympathetic acquaintance between him and my passenger, the shuckly deckhand being apparently taken in as an humble third. They sat for'ard, talking together, and my passenger read to them, on one occasion, from a piece of printed paper that fluttered in the wind.

The captain was occupied with his helm, and the thoughts he didn't seem to feel the necessity of sharing; a quiet, poised, probably stupid man, for whom I could not deny the respect we must always give to content, however simple. He was a sailor, and I don't know what better to say of a man.

So for companionship I was thrown back upon Tom. I felt, too, that he was my only friend on board, and a vague feeling had come over me that within the next few hours I might need a friend.

"Are we going too fast for fishing Tom?" I asked.

"Not too fast for a barracouta," said Tom; so we put out lines and watched the stretched strings, and listened to the sea. After a while Tom's line grew taut, and we hauled in a five-foot barracouta.

"Look!" said Tom, as he pointed to a little writhing eel-like shape, about nine inches long, attached to the belly of the barracouta.

"A sucking fish!" said Tom. "That's good luck," and he proceeded to turn over the poor creature and cut from his back, immediately below his head, a flat inch and a half of skin lined and stamped like a rubber sole—the device by which he held on to the belly of the barracouta much as the circle of wet leather holds the stone in a schoolboy's sling.

"Now," he said, when he had it clean and neat in his fingers, "we must hang this up and dry it in the northeast wind; the wind is just right—nor-nor-east—and there is no mascot like it, specially when—" Old Tom hesitated, with a sly innocent smile in his eyes.

"What is it, Tom?" I asked.

"Well, sir, I meant to say that this particular part of a sucking fish, properly dried in the northeast wind, is a wonderful mascot—when you're going after treasure."

"Who said I was going after treasure?" I asked.

"Aren't you, sah?" replied Tom "asking your pardon."

"Let's talk it over later on, when you bring me my dinner, Tom."

Later, as Tom stood, serving my coffee, I took it up with him again.

"What was that you were saying about treasure, Tom?" I asked.

"Well, sah, what I meant was this: that going after treasure is a dangerous business. . . . It's not only the living you're to think of—" Here Tom threw a careful eye for'ard.

"The crew, you mean?"

He nodded.

"But it's the dead too."

"The dead, Tom?"

"Well, sah, there was never a buried treasure yet that didn't claim its victims. Not one or two either. Six or eight of them, to my knowledge—and the treasure just where it was for all that. I das' say it sounds all foolishness, but it's true for all that. Some thing or other'll come, mark my word—just when they think they've got their hands on it: a hurricane or a tidal wave or an earthquake. And—well, the ghost laughs, but the treasure stays there all the same."

"The ghost laughs?" I asked.

"Eh! of course; didn't you know every treasure is guarded by a ghost? He's got to keep watch there till the next fellow comes along, to relieve sentry duty, so to speak. He doesn't give it away. My no! He das'n't do that. But the minute someone else is killed, coming looking for it, then he's free—and the new ghost has got to go on sitting there, waiting for ever so long till someone else comes looking for it."

"But what has this sucking fish got to do with it?" And I pointed to the red membrane already drying in Tom's hand.

"Well, the man who carries this in his pocket won't be the next ghost," I answered.

"Take good care of it for me, then Tom," I said, "and when it's properly dried let me have it. For I've a sort of idea I may have need of it, after all."

And just then old Sailor, the quietest member of the crew, put up his head into my hands, as though to say that he had been unfairly lost sight of.

"Yes, and you too, old chap—that's right. Tom and you and I."

And then I turned in for the night

The pockmarked man proves an interesting passenger and the voyage is far from monotonous

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Statement That Counts.

Do not let the man who says, "This is the year when I am going to show you how to farm it," think that he will have all clear sailing. He will meet wildcats and bears at every turn, and he may consider himself lucky if he gets off with a whole hide. The big thing is to stand on the far end of the field when the harvest is gathered in and be able to say, "I did what I said I would!"—Exchange.

## As Usual.

"I'm going out after the aviation vote."

"I see; the plane people."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

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When the world begins to applaud a man for his actions his head gets too large for his hat.

## Panama Canal Traffic.

According to the report of the government of the canal zone for a recent month, the number of ocean-going commercial vessels passing through the Panama canal for the month was 161, exclusive of eight United States government ships on which no tolls were levied, other naval ships and launches. Net tonnage of the 161 commercial ships aggregated 480,867, Panama canal measurement.

Better than a warrior is a man who hustles out to do something about it.

A man may not be a coward because he is afraid of a woman.

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## Getting Him Placed.

"That raincoat melted away in the first storm."

"The man who sold it to you was no weather prophet."

"No. He was a weather profiteer."

## Spirit Willing, Flesh Weak.

"How about that insomnia cure I gave you?"

"I must apologize, old man. The fact is, I've been too sleepy nights to try it."—Boston Transcript.

## KIDNEYS WEAKENING? BETTER LOOK OUT!

Kidney and bladder troubles don't disappear of themselves. They grow upon you, slowly but steadily, undermining your health with deadly certainty, until you fall a victim to incurable disease.

Stop your troubles while there is time. Don't wait until little pains become big aches. Don't trifle with disease. To avoid future suffering begin treatment with GOLD MEDAL Haarlem Oil Capsules now. Take three or four every day until you feel that you are entirely free from pain.

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Do not delay. Go to your druggist and insist on his supplying you with a box of GOLD MEDAL Haarlem Oil Capsules. Take them as directed, and if you are not satisfied with results your druggist will gladly refund your money. Look for the name GOLD MEDAL on the box and accept no other. In sealed boxes, three sizes.

## Walking for Pleasure.

The old-fashioned person who used to walk mile after mile on pleasant Sunday afternoons through the countryside, has practically disappeared. This is the inevitable conclusion drawn by anyone who still pursues this ancient pastime and who has spent Sunday after Sunday drilling by foot over macadam and dirt roads frequented by automobilists and an occasional farm hand traveling to a neighbor's.

Walking for the sake of the walk has nearly passed out, along with the one-horse rig, the glass-encased artificial flowers in the parlor and hair-covered furniture. It had its day before the bicycle and the automobile and with the advent of these quicker, easier means of transportation it dropped from the human scheme of things with a dull thud.—Omaha News.

## Good News for Father.

"My dear," said the banker to his only daughter, "I have noticed a young man in the drawing-room two or three evenings each week of late. What is his occupation?"

"He is at present unemployed, father," replied the fair girl, a dreamy, far-away look in her big blue eyes; "but he is thinking seriously of accepting a position of life companion to a young lady of means."—American Boy.

Weight for weight, a manila rope is just about as strong as a steel one.

## Poor Time to "Butt In."

The pale gentleman in the frock coat bore down on the red-faced, rumpily-haired fellow lying across a seat on the "down" platform.

"My friend," remonstrated the pale gentleman, "did you ever reckon up that if you had placed the price of one drink out at compound interest at the time of the beginning of the Christian era you would have \$15,400,234?"

The red-faced, rumpily-haired man raised himself on one elbow.

"No," he replied. "I haven't figured it out. But I'm something of a calculator, all the same, and if you don't go away about 137 yards in nine and a half seconds I'll hit you 17 times and make you see 42,196 stars. I've just had four teeth pulled out and you'd better go away before the arithmetic class gets over the ropes and calls time."

## Flies Anglo-American Flag.

Many people in Manchester, England, were puzzled recently by a flag seen flying over the College of Technology in that city. The flag combined the British red ensign with the American Stars and Stripes in exactly equal proportions. It was the view of the designer that the new flag might represent the English-speaking world.

## Mercury and Price Too High.

"Buy meat," the packing men advise.

"By-by meat!" the consumer cries. —Boston Transcript.

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